

Message Text

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TAGS: SNAR, TU

SUBJECT: UN PRESS RELEASE ON TURKISH OPIUM POPPY

CONTROL PROGRAM

1. WE HAVE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING PRESS RELEASE DATED
DECEMBER 23 FROM THE UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION OFFICE
IN ANKARA.

BEGIN TEXT

NO EVIDENCE THAT OPIUM WAS PRODUCED IN TURKEY IN 1975
(THE FOLLOWING IS REPRODUCED AS RECEIVED FROM UN INFOR-
MATION SERVICE, GENEVA)

A MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY
HAS REMOVED A THREAT TO THE HEALTH OF THE WORLD. A
TEMPORARY WORLD SHORTAGE OF RAW MATERIAL FOR CODEINE
AND OTHER MEDICINES HAS BEEN OVERCOME AND, SIMULTANEOUSLY
THE DANGER OF AN INCREASE IN HEROIN ADDICTION HAS BEEN
AVOIDED. THIS HAS BEEN DONE BY A TIGHTLY CONTROLLED
PROCESS WHICH EXTRACTS THE ESSENTIAL MEDICAL RAW MATERIAL,
MORPHINE, FROM THE OPIUM POPPY WITHOUT GOING THROUGH
THE LABOUR-INTENSIVE PROCESS OF INCISING THE POPPY
CAPSULES AND COLLECTING THE OPIUM GUM. THE OPIUM
PRODUCED BY CAPSULE INCISION WAS ALWAYS A THREAT, SINCE
BY DIVERSION TO THE ILLICIT TRAFFIC IT BECAME THE
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SOURCE OF ILLICIT HEROIN WHICH IS THE MOST ADDICTIVE OF

DRUGS.

TURKEY FOR MANY YEARS SUPPLIED OPIUM FOR MEDICAL USE BUT BECAUSE OF THE PROBLEM OF DIVERSION OF OPIUM INTO THE ILICIT TRAFFIC, STOPPED PRODUCTION IN 1971/1972 BY BANNING CULTIVATION OF THE OPIUM POPPY. IN SEPTEMBER 1974 TURKEY DECIDED TO RESUME POPPY CULTIVATION AND ASKED THE UNITED NATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE CONTROL. ONE MAIN REASON FOR LIFTING THE BAN WAS TO SATISFY FARMERS IN TRADITIONAL POPPY GROWING PROVINCES WHO MISSED THE POPPY SEED AND OIL WHICH FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS HAD FORMED AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR WAY OF LIFE.

THE UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL SUPPORTED THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S DECISION WHICH ALLOWED CONTROLLED POPPY CULTIVATION BUT PROHIBITED OPIUM PRODUCTION AND CONCENTRATED EXCLUSIVELY ON THE "POPPY STRAW" PROCESS. THE POPPY CAPSULES ARE NOT LANCED AND OPIUM IS NOT EXTRACTED. THE UNLANCED POPPY CAPSULES ARE DELIVERED TO A GOVERNMENT MONOPLOY FOR INDUSTRIAL PROCESSING INTO MORPHINE, CODEINE AND RAW MATERIALS FOR MEDICAL USE. THIS PROCESSING IS CURRENTLY DONE ABROAD BUT IT IS PLANNED TO BUILD A NATIONAL ALKALOIDS FACTORY WITHIN TURKEY.

TO MAKE CONTROL MEASURES EASIER, THE GOVERNMENT LIMITED POPPY CULTIVATION OVER AN AREA OF 20,000 HECTARES IN SIX PROVINCES AND PART OF A SEVENTH, SUBJECT TO A STRINGENT LICENSING AND INSPECTION SYSTEM.

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY POPPIES WERE LANCED OR ANY OPIUM PRODUCED FROM THE 1975 CROP. THE AIM NOW IS TO ENSURE THAT THIS CHANGE FROM THE OPIUM TO THE POPPY STRAW PROCESS IS MADE PERMANENT.

THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES, SUPPORTED BY THE FUND, ARE:

--TO PREVENT ILLICIT DIVERSION AT SOURCE BY CONTROL OF POPPY FIELDS, USING BETTER METHODS OF SURVEILLANCE, WITH IMPROVED TRANSPORT, RADIO COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING.
--TO INCREASE MORPHINE YIELD PER UNIT AREA OF POPPY CULTIVATED, THUS REDUCING THE AREA TO BE CONTROLLED, BY USING BETTER SEEDS, IMPROVED CULTIVATION AND SUPERIOR MEANS OF MORPHINE EXTRACTION.

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--TO MAINTAIN THE COOPERATION OF POPPY GROWERS BY GUARANTEEING THEM A REASONABLE INCOME.
--TO INCREASE TURKEY'S "STAKE" IN THE NEW PROCESS BY EARLY CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL ALKALOIDS FACTORY. THE FUND IS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO STRENGTHEN THE CONTROL SYSTEM ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS INCLUDES: TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT; A SYSTEM OF AERIAL DETECTION AND SURVEILLANCE;

SPECIAL TRAINING COURSES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS;
FELLOWSHIPS FOR ADVANCED TECHNICAL STUDIES. THE FUND
HAS ALSO INITIALLY UNDERWRITTEN A GUARANTEED PRICE TO
FARMERS BY SETTING UP A CONTINGENCY STAND-BY FUND TO
PROTECT AGAINST POSSIBLE LOSSES OF INCOME DURING THE
EARLY STAGES OF CONVERSION FROM TRADITIONAL OPIUM TO
THE POPPY STRAW PROCESS. IN THE LONG TERM ASSISTANCE
FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF POPPY-GROWING
PROVINCES IS EXPECTED TO REDUCE FARMERS' RELIANCE ON
THE OPIUM POPPY WITH ITS HEAVY CONTROL REQUIREMENTS.
THIS DEVELOPMENT SHOULD ADVANCE IN PARALLEL WITH CONTINUING
WORLDWIDE EFFORTS TO PRODUCE THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF
MEDICAL RAW MATERIAL PER AREA OF OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION.
END TEXT.
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